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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0975
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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0643
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 NOUAKCHOTT 000323

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KHUM](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S LUNCHEON WITH ANTI-COUP POLITICAL PARTIES

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 0289

[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 0312

[1](#)C. NOUAKCHOTT 0321

Classified By: DCM Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a lunch with the Ambassador, RFD and FNDD political leaders talked about repression of demonstrations, President of the Senate Ba M'Bare's "presidency," and the role played in the political crisis by Mauritania's neighbors. The FNDD and RFD asked the U.S. to pressure France into firmly opposing the coup, and declared that they had little faith in the Senegalese mediation, which they do not perceive as neutral and disinterested. While all parties participated in the luncheon, divisions between the FNDD and RFD remain obvious. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Leaders of RFD and FNDD parties attended a lunch hosted by DCM in honor of recently-returned Ambassador Boulware on May 7. RFD's Ahmed Ould Daddah, who was in Zouerate for a political rally, was represented by the party's Chief of Staff Ismael Ould Amar. FNDD guests included Messaoud Ould Boulkheir (president of the National Assembly and APP), Mohamed Ould Maouloud (president of UFP), Ba Mamadou Alassane (president of PLEJ), Boidiel Ould Houmeid (president of PNDD-ADIL), and Member in Charge of External Relations Mohamed Lemine Ould Mohamed Moussa on behalf of Tawassoul president Jemil Ould Mansour.

[1](#)3. (C) Opposition leaders were in low spirits and did little to conceal it. When greeted with the traditional "Ca va?," some frankly responded they were "not doing so well." Mohamed Ould Maouloud, Ould Boulkheir, Alassane and Ould Houmeid arrived late as they were coming directly from a sit-in demonstration at the Ministry of the Interior, which was interrupted by the announcement of spiritual leader Imam Bouddaha Ould Bousseiry's death. Comment: Imam Bousseiry's death follows by one week the passing of Imam Mohamed Salem Ould Addoud, another of Mauritania's beloved spiritual leaders. Mauritania has been deeply affected by these losses and many make a connection between the deaths and the climate of division in the country. They think something must be really wrong in Mauritania if the country has been deprived of these saintly men's presence at almost the same time. End comment. One of the first things Ould Boulkheir asked the Ambassador was to put pressure on France to oppose

the coup and refuse to recognize the June 6 election.

THE CLIMATE OF REPRESSION SOFTENS

¶4. (C) Guests noted a shift in the regime's approach to demonstrations. During the past week, demonstrations have been authorized and the police has refrained from repressing them. The last violently repressed demonstrations were the women's sit-in in front of the United Nations building and the Palais de Justice sit-in (Ref A and B). The demonstration in front of TV Mauritanie, the joint FNDD/RFD march and the joint FNDD/RFD youth march took place without incident (Ref C). Alassane wanted to know who had given the orders to violently repress demonstrations. There was little consensus on whether it was the Wali of Nouakchott or Director General of National Security (DGSN) General Hadi, but guests agreed the orders were ultimately coming from the High State Council (HSC). Guests described General Hadi as a "crazy man," stating that even members of his family feared his brutality. Ould Maouloud pointed out that the women's demonstration stirred disagreements on the policy towards demonstrations between the HSC's radical and more moderate factions. As the repression at the Palais de Justice was the last time police used force to disperse demonstrators, Maouloud suspects the HSC faction favorable to freedom of expression finally won.

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M'BARE'S POWER OR LACK THEREOF

¶5. (C) The discussion then shifted to President of the Senate and interim President Ba M'Bare. The guests aired negative opinions about M'Bare, who they criticized for being weak and lending himself to the military's game. They noted M'Bare's appointment as interim president is only symbolic and that in reality he has no power -- General Aziz's portrait still presides over government offices. Alassane argued that, as interim President, M'Bare could reschedule the election and take actions to redress the situation. Ould Boulkheir reacted very strongly by saying that M'Bare had no power because he had no constitutional legitimacy. Alassane insisted that the FNDD and RFD should talk to M'Bare and convince him to reschedule the election. Most guests rejected this idea, stating it was not realistic. Ould Houmeid pointed out that M'Bare's family had said M'Bare is "afraid" and that all his movements are under close surveillance by the military.

MAURITANIA'S NEIGHBORS

¶6. (C) The RFD's Ould Amar argued that Senegal and Morocco are conspiring to destabilize Mauritania. According to Ould Amar, these countries want a weak Mauritania in order to "divvy up the territory" and fully pursue their "interests" here. Ould Amar stressed that Aziz, who is of Moroccan descent and was raised in Senegal, has surrounded himself with a "little Rabat," a group of individuals partial to Morocco's interest. A discussion ensued about Cheikh Ould Horma, one of Aziz's main advisors. Ould Horma's father, Ahmedou Ould Horma, was the first Mauritanian deputy during the French colonial period. After failing to be re-elected and receiving assassination threats in Dakar, he moved to Morocco to promote Mauritania's annexation by Morocco. After many years, he was invited by the Mauritanian government to return to Mauritania. His children are now influential in Mauritanian circles of power and keep close ties to Morocco.

¶7. (C) Ould Amar highlighted the role played by Qadhafi in shaping Morocco's policy towards Mauritania. He stressed

that Morocco and Qadhafi were now on good terms thanks to the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD). The Moroccans allowed Qadhafi to use CEN-SAD to implement his regional agenda and supported CEN-SAD's role as an election observer in Mauritania.

¶8. (C) Guests declared themselves puzzled with Algeria's radical change in policy towards Mauritania. Algerians, who were originally opposed to the coup, have seemingly become favorable to the junta. They commented on the recent television interview by Algerian Minister for Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel, in which he said the June 6 elections would "normalize the situation" in Mauritania. The guests were puzzled at Algeria's change of position and could not pinpoint the cause.

¶9. (C) Mali's change of attitude towards the junta was also discussed. Guests stated that Mali had accepted the junta because they were afraid General Aziz would use his influence to fuel the Touareg revolt if Mali continued to reject the regime. Maouloud characterized the junta's policy as "blackmail" against Mali. Ould Houmeid asserted that during the "last attack" (presumably he meant the attack on Malian forces in Nampala in December 2008), the Touaregs had received help from Mauritania.

NO FAITH IN SENEGALESE MEDIATION

¶10. (C) Ambassador Boulware asked guests for their views of the Senegalese mediation and if they wanted the U.S. to speak

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with the Senegalese on their behalf. Ould Boulkheir responded he had "no faith" in the Senegalese mediation. He stated it was obvious the Senegalese were working for the junta. He suspects the junta wants to delay the elections and is using the Senegalese to introduce that item in the negotiation agenda to make it seem like a concession to the opposition. Ould Boulkheir feels the FNDD has been trapped for too long in the junta's agenda and that they will participate in this agenda if they ask to delay the elections. The FNDD's and RFD's goal is to thwart the coup d'etat, said Ould Boulkheir. Moving the elections by a few months does not change anything if they cannot ultimately achieve that goal. Guests pointed out that the Senegalese were keen on moving forward with the mediation and that Senegalese Foreign Affairs Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio was arriving in Mauritania the next day. Comment: Gadio arrived that same day with a plan drafted by President Wade. The FNDD, while still suspicious, seems inclined to now consider it as a basis for discussion -- SEPTELs will report on Ambassador's May 11 meeting with President Abdallahi and DCM's meeting with FNDD "Foreign Minister" Ould Maouloud. End comment.

¶11. (C) Ould Houmeid, who sat morosely for most of the lunch (at times with his head in his hands), came out of his silence to stress the role that Qadhafi had played in obstructing a solution to the crisis. He said the Benin Ambassador to the AU had been sent home because he made a statement against Qadhafi's handling of the Mauritanian crisis. According to Ould Houmeid, this event has dissuaded others from challenging Qadhafi's decisions.

¶12. (C) Ould Maouloud further expounded on Ould Boulkheir's statements. According to Ould Maouloud, the FNDD wants the military to reach the conclusion they need to reschedule the election on their own. The FNDD refuses to ask for a delay as it does not want General Aziz to use the election as a bargaining chip by saying "I'll reschedule the election if the FNDD gives up Abdallahi's return and if the RFD accepts a military candidacy." Ould Maouloud thought Aziz was already convinced of the need to delay the election, but was trying to get a "deal" that would have the FNDD and RFD yield on

their two redlines. Ould Maouloud stated that Aziz's unilateral agenda was set without consulting the FNDD or the RFD. They therefore refuse to acknowledge his agenda by asking him to move the elections. They told Ambassador and DCM that they would rather see the election take place on June 6 than give Aziz more time than he has already had.

¶13. (C) The guests feel that they have failed if Aziz is able to start his campaign. "If nothing happens before May 15," Ould Maouloud said, "that means we will start applying our agenda." Ould Amar also said "the next 10 days are decisive," implying that the RFD would also change its tactics. Comment: The presidential campaign is scheduled to start on May 22. Maouloud and Amar did not explain why they were using the May 15 date as a point of reference, what event they were expecting would happen before that date, and what agenda the FNDD/RFD plans to adopt. Nevertheless, their statements sounded like a threat of more violent tactics. End comment.

¶14. (C) Comment: The luncheon was amicable with multiple statements of support for the U.S. position in the aftermath of the coup. Divisions between the FNDD and RFD concerning the role of President Abdallahi remained clear. The RFD's Ould Amar made his FNDD partners bristle when he argued that the Constitutional Council's decision that there was a "presidential vacancy" was an unfortunate but unappealable fact meaning that "Ba M'Bare is now the president of Mauritania." Ould Boulkheir challenged the legal foundation of a ruling that cited documents such as the declarations of the High State Council on an equal footing with the constitution. Ould Amar made clear that the RFD saw the need for consensual elections as an exit strategy for Mauritania -- but made clear that Abdallahi's return was not necessarily

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an important element in that process. End comment.

BOULWARE